



NEWSLETTER

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SUCCESSFUL UMKHOMAZI CATTLE AUCTION

Meat Naturally Africa working with the Institute of Natural Resources in the uMkhomazi Catchment (Impendle area) started the year 2024 with a profitable cattle sale on January 18. This market access under the Herding for Health initiative aims to provide a platform for local small-holder farmers to buy and sell cattle as part of rangeland management interventions.

The auction that took place at Imbaliyezwe was requested by the Impendle Livestock Association, the umbrella structure of fourteen participating dip tanks in the Herding for Health model.

Meat Naturally Africa provides local farmers with convenient market access if they meet the rangeland stewardship requirements. Farmers in Impendle had to jointly register a minimum of one hundred branded cattle before the auction date to trigger sale preparations.

While there was some noise about the low prices at the auction, it is worth noting that January is typically a time when market prices dip. This also indicates the need for more rural mentorship programs and capacity-building initiatives to support local farmers in understanding market fluctuations to better generate a sustainable livelihood.

The success of the uMkhomazi Cattle Auction is a demonstration of the collaborative efforts of the INR, Meat Naturally, Impendle Livestock Association and local stakeholders. It provides economic opportunities for small-holder farmers and contributes to the broader goal of sustainable land management.

Statistic	Value
Number of animals arrived	115
Number of cattle sold	101
Number of unsold cattle	14
Percentage sold	87%
Minimum price	R2 650,00
Maximum price	R13 000,00
Average price sold	R6 794,00
Potential turnover	R686 150,00



END OF GROWING SEASON: THE ECOTRAINER'S PERSPECTIVE

Autumn marks the end of the growing season for most plants, including grasses. Rangeland restoration through the reduction of bare ground and improved plant diversity are some of the main priorities for the GRASS initiative in the Drakensberg sub-escarpment. This means that this is the perfect time to review the outcomes of all activities implemented towards this goal over the last six months.

To ensure that there is sufficient implementation support on the ground, Meat Naturally added Ecotrainers to its team of technical experts. Locally embedded MN staff members assist ecorangers and farmers to fulfil their Rangeland Stewardship Agreements.

Ecotrainers are seasoned ecorangers that are carefully selected and undergo three months of accredited theoretical and practical training followed by on-the-job skills development. Their role has been critical in ensuring that the newly appointed ecorangers understand rotational resting and how to implement it in a communal grazing area.



The trainers have also equipped both farmers and ecorangers with skills in herd handling, early disease identification, and soil erosion management. In preparation for the dry season, with assistance from the technical teams, Ecotrainers will present to farmers workshops on carbon benefits, fire management and small stock production.

Apart from mentoring ecorangers and farmer associations, as newly appointed staff members, the Ecotrainers have also spent time shadowing MN technical experts so that they become well-versed in all aspects of the MN business. Another twenty-four Ecotrainers are planned to start their training programme in June.

As the season ends, the current Ecotrainers reviewed their journey in a short questionnaire; some of their responses follow.

- *What do you enjoy about being an Ecotrainer?*
- Working with a team that is passionate about rangelands and nature conservation.



**Phindile
Mboyi**

- *What did you enjoy most this growing season?*
- Green grasslands with grass grown up to my knees. This has been a beautiful sight especially in the early hours of the morning with cows grazing.



**Sizwe
Mlambo**

- *What did you enjoy most this growing season?*
- Improved grazing practices that resulted in animals looking fat and healthy.



**Simnikile
Magoqo**



- *Share something you did not know as an ecoranger.*
- I was not aware of the impacts of alien invasive plants encroaching [on] the rangeland.



Msimelelo Buyeye

- *Share something you did not know as an ecoranger.*
- Healthy and well-fed cows should be calving every year and this is important for farmer benefits.



Nkosentle Bhengu

- *Highlight one life-changing lesson you have learned.*
- To work well with people it is important to respect them and be patient.



Siiyanda Mveli

- *Highlight one life-changing lesson you have learned.*
- Understand that my work is my responsibility, carrying myself with respect at all times and respecting others.



Sisipho Kraai

- *Highlight one life-changing lesson you have learned.*
- Change is important if it is directed in the right direction.



Sifiso Gasa

- *What has been your greatest challenge and how did you overcome it?*
- Explaining Herding for Health to older farmers ... We had to reconcile some of their practices with what the program aims to achieve. This taught me a lot about communication and problem-solving.



Magcino Maphis

- *What has been your greatest challenge and how did you overcome it?*
- Being discouraged by my community to work with livestock because I am a female. I have worked hard to prove that I can do this and [to] inspire other females to become ecorangers.



Nosipho Mhlongo

Meat Naturally's Mobile Abattoir Revolutionizes Community Livelihoods

In a groundbreaking move this February, MN Kruger Meats, a subsidiary of Meat Naturally, launched its innovative mobile abattoir, marking a pivotal moment in area agriculture and conservation efforts. This mobile abattoir isn't just a game-changer; it's a symbol of progress, collaboration, and sustainability.

MN Kruger Meats' mobile abattoir operates within the buffer zone of the renowned Kruger National Park and services communities that adhere to the Herding for Health model. This strategic location not only promotes local economic development but also aligns with conservation goals by mitigating conflicts between wildlife and neighboring communities.

Designed to provide essential services directly to communal lands, the mobile abattoir brings slaughtering facilities closer to where the livestock are raised. Initially based in Acornhoek, this pioneering endeavor aims to fine-tune operations and ensure compliance with evolving legislation and regulations.

As the first mobile abattoir catering to cattle in communal lands nationwide, MN Kruger Meats is not only reshaping local economies but also challenging existing norms and paving the way for future agricultural efforts.

Since its inception, MN Kruger Meats has made remarkable strides. With over 4000 kg of meat produced, the venture has become a beacon of hope for local farmers. Employment opportunities have flourished, with five individuals directly benefiting from



the venture. Moreover, MN Kruger Meats has injected R200,000 into the local economy, underscoring its role as a catalyst for sustainable growth.

Looking ahead, the journey of MN Kruger Meats promises to be one of continued innovation and



collaboration. By bridging the gap between Kruger National Park and nearby localities, the mobile abattoir exemplifies the harmonious coexistence of conservation and community development.

Moreover, MN Kruger Meats is pioneering a continental model for supporting farmers within a Foot and Mouth Disease Zone. By providing market access and essential services, this initiative holds the potential to revolutionize agricultural practices across the continent.

The accomplishments of MN Kruger Meats thus far project an optimism for the future. Each success reaffirms stronger commitment to fostering sustainable livelihoods, preserving natural resources, and building more resilient communities.

Such innovation and collaboration can pave the way for a brighter tomorrow.



Pondoland Youth Shine in City Nature Challenge 2024

The Wildcoast Pondoland Region made a solid showing during the City Nature Challenge 2024 where global cities compete in collecting wildlife and biodiversity data using iNaturalist App to identify flora and fauna.

The Pondoland region placed sixth in Southern Africa and second in the Eastern Cape demonstrating the region's rich biodiversity. Final results of the tally by fifty-nine observers showed a total of 4200 species and 6800 observations collected in the four-day event.

Conservation Exposure Education and Training (CEET) is a MN partner that implements the Herding for Health model in the Wildcoast Pondoland region. In March, teams from CEET and Sustaining the Wildcoast (SWC) began mobilising the youth to participate in the contest. The CEET team visited schools, nature reserves and communities to train youth how to use their smart phones for the City Nature Challenge .

CEET Ecotrainer Phindile Mboyi also recruited ecorangers working in the Herding for Health rangelands restoration program which bolstered the number of observers and observations made. There are thirty-eight ecorangers placed in the Pondoland Region and one of them was very surprised that there was a smart phone app that could be used to collect and identify biodiversity in their working environment (grazing lands). They have since been using the app for

work to identify plants and animals observed in their rangelands.

The active recruitment of youth and ecorangers resulted in youths making up more than 90 percent of the total number of observers. This enthusiasm not only demonstrates a growing interest in nature among Pondoland's youth but also highlights the potential of this generation to drive conservation efforts.

The CEET Team, SWC, Mbizana Local Municipality, DEDEAT, SANBI and other stakeholders managed to ensure the region placed higher than it had in previous years of participation. Having ecorangers was also very crucial to the region's success in the Challenge. The best performing ecoranger was Busi from Kwa Cele who contributed over 150 observations.

Top-performing youth observers included Lindelani Gama (445 obs.), Phindile Mboyi (420 obs.) and Kholeka (345 obs.). Their dedication to documenting the region's flora and fauna contributes valuable data for scientific research and conservation planning.

The City Nature Challenge 2024 has not only showcased Pondoland's natural treasures on a global stage but has also ignited a passion for conservation among the region's youth. This bodes well for the future of natural resources management in Pondoland. The Next Citizen Science event will be the Great Southern BioBlitz 2024 taking place September 20-23.

Kraaling Used to Restore Rangelands

In the heart of the KwaBhaca landscape, communal farmers are embarking on a journey of restoration. Guided by Herding for Health and harmony with nature principles, they have joined hands with Meat Naturally Africa to practice a time-honoured tradition: night kraaling.

These farmers gather livestock in bare patches of their rangelands, aiming to bring life back to the soil through dung and urine deposition. In the quiet night of Upper Mkhemane rangelands, one might only hear a cow regurgitating after a full day grazing in the well managed rangelands. Through night kraaling, these farmers hope to nurture their land back to health one night at a time with the help of their cattle.

United by a deep-rooted love and respect for their livestock and nature, they are stewards of the land.



Empowering South African Farmers: Meat Naturally's Impact on Risk Reduction

South African communal farmers often face daunting challenges that threaten their livelihoods and the well-being of their livestock. The activities of Meat Naturally and its partners help empower farmers and mitigate some of their biggest risks.

Combatting Stock Theft: Strengthening Ownership and Security

Stock theft remains a pervasive threat, undermining the efforts of farmers and disrupting their economic stability. Recognizing this, Meat Naturally has facilitated the acquisition of ownership certificates for 209 farmers from the Department of Agriculture. These certificates not only authenticate ownership but also provide farmers with a registered brand, making possible swift identification and recovery of stolen livestock by law enforcement agencies.

This proactive approach extends to on-the-ground branding initiatives, where 1116 cattle were branded in collaboration with local farmers and ecorangers. The act of branding serves as a potent deterrent and enhances the security of farmers' assets thereby reducing the risk of theft. Importantly, such support empowers farmers, particularly women, with the knowledge and resources they need to navigate ownership transfer processes while fostering a sense of confidence and security within the farming community.



Ensuring Animal Health: Knowledge as a Shield Against Disease

Disease outbreaks pose a significant threat to livestock health and farmer livelihoods. In response, Meat Naturally has partnered with Afrivet to equip farmers with comprehensive herd health plans tailored to their specific needs. Through targeted training sessions, farmers gain the knowledge and skills needed for effective disease prevention and detection, particularly focusing on winter ailments.

The impact of this initiative is profound. Farmers have expressed gratitude for the invaluable insights gained and the increased access to vaccinations and medicines that safeguard animal health.

Mitigating Fire Risks: Preserving Ecosystems and Livelihoods



As winter approaches, the threat of wildfires looms large over communal rangelands, endangering both land and livelihoods. Meat Naturally has taken proactive measures to address this risk through collaboration with government Disaster Risk Reduction agencies and private sector partners from forestry and conservation sectors.

Through a series of awareness and training programs, farmers and local communities are equipped with essential skills and knowledge to mitigate fire risks effectively. By promoting responsible fire management practices, we not only protect livelihoods but also preserve the delicate ecosystems on which farmers depend.

